EDGE essential hardware

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The Future is here...and it Works

The Cybermaxx is an astonishing product and provides an experience that is almost impossible to describe. Designed for use with any IBM compatible PC, 386 and above the headset weighs just 14oz and and immerses you totally in a world of sound and movement that really is Virtual Reality. Astonishing 3-D stereo scopic graphics jump out at you with dazzling high intensity colour and realism. Move your head left, right , up and down, characters and scenery respond instantly and come into view. This really is total game play! A pair of stereo speakers built into the headset provides a feeling of being there that is truly awesome. "Footsteps in your right ear and behind you, turn your head fast, there it is, fire - you're still alive!"

Product Specification

☛ Displays: Two 0.7 inch active matrix colour LCD ☛ Resolution: 120k and 180k Pixels with depletion filters ☛ Field of view: (Horizontal) 62 degrees ☛ Yaw tracking: 0.0360 degree s ☛ Pitch and Roll tracking: +/ -45 degrees ☛ Weight :14 oz

Complete Startup Software kit

Ghost Train - Synthetic Dimensions (Diskette)

A virtual reality amusement park ride, in which the headset wearer is fully immersed in a computer - generated haunted house. The viewer travels along a preset monorail, and encounters a wide variety of ghosts and goblins and other nasties. A wonderful introduction to the State of the Art tracking capabilities and 3-D stereoscopic point of view of the Cybermaxx headset.

System Shock - Origin (CD - ROM)

This is a 3-D, stereoscopic adventure game set within the confines of a futuristic space station. Incorporating high resolution animated texture mapping in ten breathtaking levels of full and multi - screen viewing. As players career through the labyrinths of cyberspace, they are fully immersed in an interactive landscape.

3-D Ware - Virtek (diskette)

A sophisticated virtual reality world building toolkit. Incorporating cutting edge 3-D graphics technology, this program is a complete VR development tool that allows the user to create and manipulate three dimensional shapes and images in real time. 3-D Ware comes with a built in library of functions and paradigms which allow users to write anything from games to molecular modelling.

VR Slingshot - Virtual Entertainment(Diskette)

A real time physics based 3-D environment that allows for a host of gaming applications. Designed to allow two people to compete in a variety of virtual cybersports via modem. Unlike most games where the objective is to completely annihilate your opponent, in VR Slingshot, the objective is to out perform your opponent. The games incorporate aspects of dogfighting, boxing, bumper cars, pumper planes, lacrosse, and handball. VR Slingshot provides real time computational airflow simulation, real - time physics based interaction, advanced flying and driving simulation and stereoscopic 3-D graphics 3-D sound.

Software is Crucial

The astonishing impact of Cybermaxx has already allowed software developers to completely rethink the capability of their product. No longer limited by a flat screen image new titles will fast be coming to the market and sooner than you would believe possible

CyberMaxx VR Headset £499 ex VAT £586.33 inc VAT

New Titles Arriving Soon

Wings of Glory £39.99
A 3 Dimensional stereo scopic , flight simulation experience

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Welcome to the Shareware version of descent, the first 8 levels of the most mind bending, stomach churning action in a true 360 degree 3-D environment. CD Quality music, 3-D directional Sound Effects.

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Your fleet will walk ancient corridors, your hands will wield weapons of metal and magic battling disembodied foes to rescue your allies from evil. Hollywood special effects, stunning live action cinematic sequences, 3-D rendered dungeons, a phenomenal experience.

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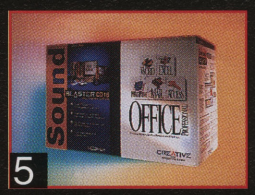

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4 PC

The PC is one machine that's here to stay. **Edge** cuts through the technobabble and details the range of PCs available and the best possible set-ups for playing the latest games. Pentiums are fast, 486SXs are cheap…

8 3DO

After a disappointing start, the 3DO cause is gathering pace. Coinciding with the arrival of the Panasonic machine in the UK are some spectacularly playable games. **Edge** thinks it's a powerful system worthy of serious consideration.

9 Jaguar

Atari's 64bit console got off to a very slow start. Games were virtually non-existent, and most were poor. Finally, though, there are reasons why this could be a machine worth buying. *Doom* is one of the most convincing ones…

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15 Peripherals

Peripherals with potential. **Edge** rounds up a selection of add-ons that can improve your existing system. Turn your A1200 into a CD32, or even your CD32 into an A1200, get stereo sound out of your game system, or (just maybe) try out virtual reality on your PC…

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Welcome

We are about to enter the most fraught period in the history of the interactive entertainment industry. Never have there been so many new formats competing for attention, and all have something to recommend them.

Buying new hardware has never been an easy task, but it's about to get even harder. This guide sets out to collate the respective benefits of technology you can buy today – exciting new hardware that is readily available. While new gaming technology will arrive on import soon, it's worth remembering that it will have no official UK support for at least the next ten months. Those who are unprepared to rely solely on the import market can immediately choose from three complete systems that offer next generation performance: the PC, 3DO and Jaguar.

PC owners have long had access to good software, but as a games machine the IBM standard has finally come of age. A fast machine is still a major investment, but with it comes a flood of software support, and a catalogue of outstanding games.

Similarly, after software-starved, low-key launches in the United States, both 3DO and Jaguar have made it to the UK, and a steady stream of good-quality software is starting to flow. Those in doubt about the technical merits of both these systems should check out some of the latest titles. The future could be even closer than you think.

EDGE

PC compatibles: here to stay

The PC is one platform that is truly scaleable. However, buying a suitable system for games is more complicated than you might think

PCs can be individually built or customised to fulfil any special requirements. High-quality speakers and graphic equalisers are widely available

When the Personal Computer was invented in 1978, IBM was so sure that it would remain a specialised tool with little or no commercial future that it decided it was not worth patenting. In a move that will probably go down as one of the biggest mistakes a company has ever made, IBM inadvertently opened the way for one of the greatest technological success stories of the twentieth century.

This evolutionary process has culminated in a huge number of machines available, and an even greater amount of techno-jargon: 386, 387, 486SX, 486DX2, Pentium, Intel, Cyrix and AMD, PCI- and VESA-compliant local buses... the list is as long as you want it to be.

The computer industry is, by its very nature, volatile. The PC is the only standard to have withstood the test of time and, as a result, it encompasses a truly global market. Its backward compatibility ensures it is future-proof: that is, you will never have to buy a new machine because your existing model will always be supported, even though

The recommended system: a 66MHz 486DX2 machine with 8Mb of RAM. With a good soundcard and speakers, the machine remains affordable

A 486SX-33 machine (above) is possibly the slowest that should be considered for games. It is easily powerful enough to run low-powered graphic adventures, though

you may need to upgrade at regular points. And the technological advances of the last few years have ensured that it currently plays host to some of the most exciting games available.

The most powerful PCs are always based on the latest generation of chips – which, today, are Intel's Pentium central processing units. Capable of running games at unprecedented speed, Pentium PCs arethe most desirable machines of them all.

The PC is the only standard to have withstood the test of time. It embraces a truly global market and its backward compatibility ensures it is future-proof

Due to improved manufacturing techniques and increased competition, Intel's Pentium chips are now very reasonably priced. The most affordable Pentium is the lowest-range model, the Pentium 60MHz, and its new chip architecture guarantees performance increases over the previous generation of CISC chips like the 386 and 486. The ideal Pentium set-up would include 8Mb of RAM as standard (highly recommended whatever system you are contemplating), a 528Mb hard disk (not that much more expensive than lower-capacity drives), a fast PCI bus and graphics card, and a double-speed CD-ROM drive and 16bit or (if you can afford it) 32bit Soundblaster-compatible soundcard. Expect a set-up like this to cost between £1500-£2000.

Pentiums are not, however, strictly necessary for the majority of users. The 486 series is still going strong and the higher-end 486s offer serious performance. Although the 486 was first released in 1990, it has only been within the past 18 months that prices have dropped enough for them to become affordable for most users.

Edge's recommended 486-based machine is the DX2 66MHz (DX4 machines are expensive and less preferable to a Pentium). This is fast enough to satisfy today's power-hungry games, yet cheap enough to be accessible. When fitted with 8Mb of RAM and either a VESA local bus-compatible or PCI bus graphics card, this type of machine is capable of running most games at a decent speed.

Coupled with this you'll need a 16bit soundcard. One of the best you

Continued next page

PC

Slower machines like this 486SX-25 with CD-ROM drive and graphic equaliser are typical of affordable, low-end multimedia machines

Continued

can currently buy for games is the Soundblaster AWE32 – Creative Labs' latest 32bit model. With a graphic equaliser and a pair of high-quality JPW speakers, the results are highly impressive, putting some stereos to shame. Of course, you'll also need a CD-ROM drive to get the most of it.

The next step down in terms of power and budget are 486 chips running at 33MHz and 25MHz. While machines like these lack the raw power needed for fast 3D, they are eminently affordable, and easily upgraded to DX2 66MHz and DX2 50MHz with the addition of a clock-doubling Overdrive chip (around £200–£250). Lower-end machines like these often come with many accessories, like built-in amplifiers, graphic equalizers, and, particularly in the multimedia market, packages like Creative's *Multimedia Office Pack* – an all-round desktop package.

Another consideration for prospective PC owners is MPEG. While watching movies on a tiny PC monitor is rather silly, the range of MPEG-assisted multimedia products is increasing, and MPEG technology is also improving steadily. The Ace Moviemaster 24 is the latest and the best MPEG card available in the UK (and it's British-designed, too). The manufacturers claim it's the first 24bit true-colour card (Sigma's Reelmagic card and other models are only 15bit).

If powering the latest games is not your only interest, then a low-end system like an SX25 multimedia machine might be suitable. Most manufacturers also offer an extensive range of options; the machines highlighted above offer only a selection of the possible configurations.

However, if you are serious about your games, it can't be stressed just how important a fast clock speed is. Anything less than a 486DX-33 is too slow for the latest 3D games (*Magic Carpet*, *Doom II*, etc) while a 66MHz DX2 is significantly faster than a 50MHz DX2, and a better investment.

So far this year, PC sales are up 56% on the same period last year and the sales sector will soon be worth over £2.5 billion. The PC is a machine with a future. You should have one.

You'll need a fast PC to get the most from *Magic Carpet* (above) while the pre-rendered *Myst* (above left) simply needs a fast CD-ROM drive

WORLD CUP GOLF COMPETITION

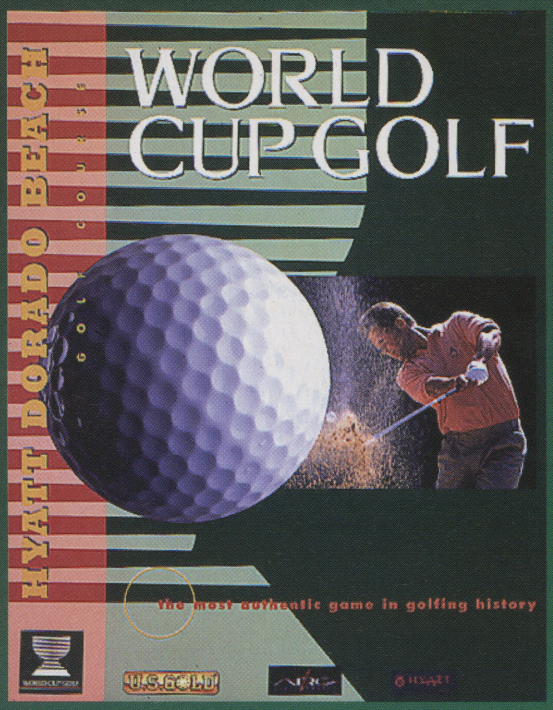
Win a 3DO

The World Cup of Golf is the oldest and most prestigious international golf team event in the world. This year's tournament, played in Puerto Rico, was watched by a vast world wide TV audience in over 123 countries.

U.S. Gold's World Cup Golf game has just been released on five CD formats, namely, 3DO, CDi, CD-32, MCD and PC CD-Rom. The game allows up to 64 players at any one time on some formats and there are 16 tournament modes to choose from including the World Cup Golf tournament.

U.S. Gold is offering EDGE readers the chance to win a 3DO plus a whole host of exclusive World Cup Golf gear! Five runners-up will receive a copy of World Cup Golf on any available format, plus an exclusive World Cup Golf polo shirt, cap and custom made mug.

Simply answer the question below (answer may be found in the above text) on a postcard with your name, address and the format on which you would like World Cup Golf and send to: World Cup Golf Competition



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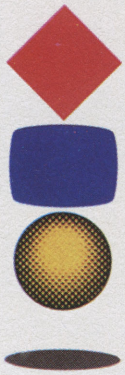
3DO: a standard approach



The success of the PC can be attributed to two main factors: backward compatibility, which means that you can expand and build on your PC as new developments and add-ons come along; and the fact that PCs can be built by anyone who wants to build them.

3DO has been conceived on the same pricinciple – Panasonic's machine hit the UK in early September and other 3DO machines will be arriving soon from manufacturers such as Goldstar, Sanyo and Samsung.

Since its launch in the US in October 1993, 3DO has taken time to establish itself as a worthy next-generation platform. Initially, software quality was poor, but now the format is playing host to some superb games. Electronic Arts' titles like *John Madden Football*, *Road Rash* and *The Need For Speed* (see review in **Edge** 16) are all firmly in a class of their own, making brilliant use of the system's graphics. And with the arrival of an arcade perfect conversion of *Super Street Fighter II X*, the system is about to get a huge credibility boost.

3DO hasn't had an easy ride so far, but a growing library of quality software assure its success. Later next year, the company is planning the M2 accelerator add-on to keep its hardware in the running

Currently, 3DO is the most powerful games system on sale, although as a technical safeguard, it also has its next level of performance clearly mapped out. The 64bit M2 accelerator (codenamed Bulldog) is scheduled for late 1995, uses Power PC technology, and plugs into the existing 3DO hardware, supposedly boosting its performance to workstation levels.

The vision of the 3DO as a global standard is an admirable goal, although it has taken several price drops in the US to convince consumers to buy into it. In the UK the system has sold strongly since launch, despite the hardware retailing at an uncomfortably high £400. Another price drop is expected later next year.

After a relatively shaky start, 3DO is materialising as a platform with a promising future.

EA's *The Need For Speed* isn't perfect, but the graphics are phenomenal

Creative Labs' 3DO Blaster card will be available soon. It includes the entire 3DO chipset and enables 3DO games to be played on the PC

Jaguar: Atari's new start

The Atari Jaguar has loyal followers but games like *Doom* (above) will do the system's mainstream reputation no harm

Atari's Jaguar is still the only 64bit console to be released (although its 64bit pedigree is a matter of conjecture), and is finally getting some quality software. A CD-ROM drive (below) is arriving next year

Atari seemed to be asking for trouble. After the marketing disasters that were the Lynx and the Falcon, naming its make-or-break 64-bit console the 'Jaguar' only encouraged sceptics to classify it as an endangered species.

Like 3DO, Atari got the Jaguar off to a slow start thanks to a low-key launch, a clumsy casing design and a run of distinctly humdrum games (let's hope *Crescent Galaxy* star Trevor McFur isn't staging a comeback).

Some pretty major resuscitation is the way, though, in the form of some solid, playable games, with a CD-ROM drive and MPEG add-on arriving soon. Probably the most significant turning point will be marked by the release of *Doom* (see review in **Edge** 16), which beats Sega's 32X version to the shelves. Now, instead of a £1000 PC, all that's needed is a £230 Jaguar and the £60 cart.

Atari is currently preparing to release its plug-in CD-ROM drive accessory in the States for under $200, and it's expected to ship into American stores before Christmas with *Blue Lightning* and Cybermorph sequel *Battlemorph*. A UK model will arrive in March next year with (hopefully) a much wider selection of titles.

Major resuscitation is on the way in the form of some solid, playable games, with a CD-ROM drive and MPEG add-on arriving soon

As long as the games keep improving, the Jaguar has a place in the market. And remember, it's still the only format with the sublime *Tempest 2000*...

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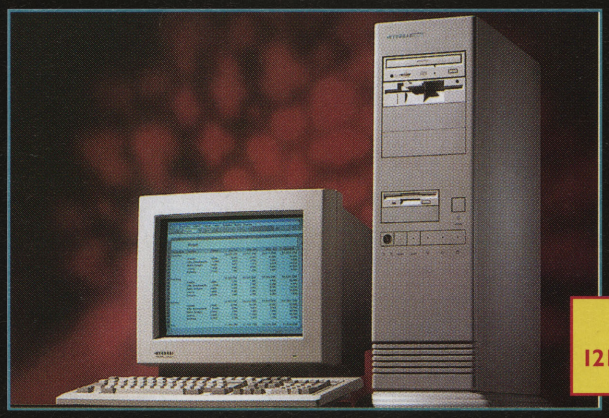

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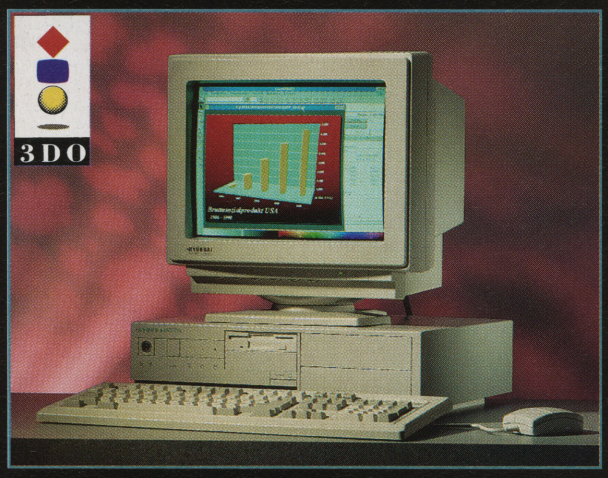

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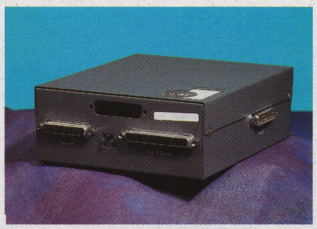
AN AVERAGE CASE HISTORY

Derek (who's real name has been changed for the sake of anonymity) visits his local Calculus Computer Store (yet another one that we've opened recently) and buys a Sega 32X, Calibra Multimedia PC, 3DO, Jaguar and a whole host of games to play on them (no social life cos he's an Estate Agent!). Having cleared our credit checks (he's over 23 and has a licence to drive his Allegro which he used as ID) he got a massive £1500 instant credit. Off he goes to spend the next six months (182 long nights) having a very fulfilling time indeed. Then, right on schedule, his hand held personal organiser bleeps, signalling the end of his six months of free fun. Or is it? Derek remembers FLEXIBILITY! Should he pay for all of his goodies now with no interest charges at all (phwoarr! The last 182 nights haven't cost a bean yet!) or should he pay over the next 24 or 36 months at 29.8%APR? Having nothing better to do with his money Derek decides to pay in full and send us a thankyou note with a huge box of chocs for coming up with such a brilliant deal.

FLEXIBILITY = Loads & loads of choice.
NO INTEREST = No charge for six months.
NO DEPOSIT = Nothing to pay when you buy.

Peripherals

The PC and Amiga markets are awash with products that enhance existing hardware set-ups. From CD-ROM drives and speakers, to gadgets for the upwardly mobile such as low-cost virtual reality head-mounted displays, **Edge** selects a group of accessories that might take your fancy.

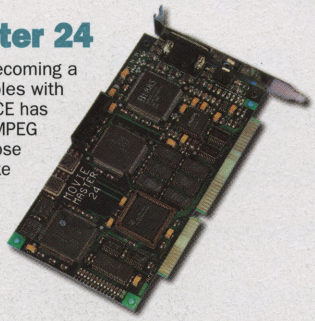


Microbotics/Paravision SX-1

Almost the opposite of the Zappo CD-ROM drive, this unit plugs into the expansion port of a CD^{32} and allows standard Amiga hardware to be connected, such as modems, printers, hard drives and floppy drives. This means you can turn your games console into a fully-fledged A1200, and be able to get more out of games with save options. The unit also provides a 23-pin RGB output so you can attach a standard Amiga monitor. A connector means you can still attach the FMV module to watch Video CD movies.

Ace MovieMaster 24

MPEG, for all its shortcomings, is becoming a desirable feature for PC compatibles with CD-ROM drives. UK-based company ACE has developed the world's first true 24bit MPEG card, and the results are better than those obtained from established MPEG cards like Sigma's ReelMagic, which is only 15bit.



Zappo CD-ROM drive

Commodore said it couldn't be done, but a French hardware developer has produced a CD^{32}-compatible CD-ROM drive for the Amiga 1200 that plugs into the PCMCIA slot. The big trouble with the proposed CBM drive was that it would take up the trapdoor slot, tying up the A1200s expansion capability. This drive features a sturdy frontloading dual-speed mechanism, PhotoCD and audio CD compatibility, and works with CD^{32} titles such as *Microcosm*, *The Chaos Engine* and *Ultimate Body Blows*. The unit also means you can save games to any Amiga DOS.

Quickshot Soundmate Ultra

Affordable active speakers like these (above) are the perfect complement to an inexpensive set-up. Ideal for those who care about the sound of their system, but need to keep to a tight budget.

Mini speakers

Stereo sound doesn't have be expensive. These mini battery-operated speakers provide a sonic boost to any low-end computer or console.

Cybermaxx VR headset

Affordable VR isn't quite here, but US-based firm Cybermaxx has made a determined effort to give PC owners a taste of what HMDs can eventually deliver. As expected from a £500 system, the imaging is rather crude, but it does produce a proper 3D effect. As yet, there's only one finished game – a (rather blurry) version of Origin's *System Shock*.

JPW speakers

The latest 16bit and 32bit soundcards from Gravis and Creative Labs are best accompanied by a decent set of speakers. These JPW Satellites boast superb sound quality with 70 watts of power handling.

Today's hardware market is more confusing than ever. You need something to take you through it. This essential hardware guide, produced in association with Calculus, details the profusion of new gaming technology now readily available in the UK.
The future is already here.

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